

# Protestors block minister's Pinnacles path

## Two hundred tramp for hut opening

Two hundred people joined Conservation Minister Denis Marshall to open the new Pinnacles Hut in the Kauaeranga Valley on Sunday.

Department of Conservation staff, anti-mining protestors, Hauraki iwi and the public tramped up to the Pinnacles Hut for the official ribbon cutting ceremony.

The new \$250,000 hut features 80 beds, a modern kitchen, three sunny dunnies, solar-powered lighting, a fire, and a cold shower.

One hundred Coromandel Peninsula Watchdog protestors confronted Mr Marshall on the tramp up to the hut.

They were supporting Judith Tizard's Private Member's Bill which would prohibit gold mining in Coromandel Forest Park.

Protestors blocked Mr Marshall's path with a "bush theatre" and the minister had to walk through an imitation prospecting zone complete with the

by Susan Bisset

sound of drilling rigs blasting from a portable stereo.

Mr Marshall remained philosophical about the demonstration, saying it would not be Coromandel without a protest.

"I do not have the ability to make a personal decision (regarding mining access to DOC land), I must follow the law," said the minister.

After tramping 2½ hours to the new hut, walkers joined Ngati Paoa kaumatua Den Davis in a special ceremony to bless the new hut on behalf of Ngati Maru tangata whenua.

DOC Kauaeranga Valley Field Centre manager Peter Carter said the hut was a good asset for families and school groups.

Regional Conservator Stella Penny said the hut should pay itself off and will encourage people to spend longer in the area, boosting the Coromandel economy.



Conservationists picket the opening of the Pinnacles Hut on Sunday to give conservation minister Denis Marshall a strong message. They want mining stopped on all Coromandel Department of Conservation land.